

Twice the Protein at No Extra Cost

New Maize Hybrid in El Salvador

On November 8, 1999, farmers, politicians, scientists, and seed producers in El Salvador witnessed the release of a new maize hybrid that could transform the diets of the poor. Not only does the hybrid, HQ-61, outyield current commercial hybrids by 15%, but it also contains twice the tryptophan and lysine—essential amino acids in human and animal nutrition. “For people who lack the resources to purchase milk or eggs, use of



Dignitaries attending the ceremonies included (left to right) El Salvador's Minister of Agriculture, Salvador Urrutia Loucel; Nobel Peace laureate, Norman E. Borlaug; the Japanese Ambassador, and CIMMYT Maize Program Director, Shivaji Pandey.

this grain in tortillas or other maize based foods will provide more protein at no additional cost,” says Norman Borlaug, Nobel Peace laureate who attended the ceremonies and has enthusiastically promoted quality protein maize (QPM).

“The new hybrid provides the protein necessary for the children's growth,” said the country's Minister of Agriculture, Salvador Urrutia Loucel,

in his address to participants. Fully 40% of El Salvador's populace is under 14 years old, and the average Salvadoran inhabitant consumes more than 130 kilograms of maize each year. Most maize in El Salvador is used for human food, but one third goes into feed, largely for pigs and poultry. According to Urrutia, the government is taking steps to promote the use of HQ-61 on nearly 70% of the country's maize growing area over 2000-2004. This time frame could be shortened: In spring 2000, 800 tons of seed will be produced.

The hybrid's productivity and other qualities should further this aim. In widespread tests in El Salvador in 1999, farmers gave HQ-61 high marks for yield and other important traits, including husk cover (which protects the ear from diseases and pests) and flavor. One farmer reported that when he fed his pigs on grain from the new hybrid, HQ-61, they gained weight nearly twice as fast as those fed on normal maize.



Nippon Foundation



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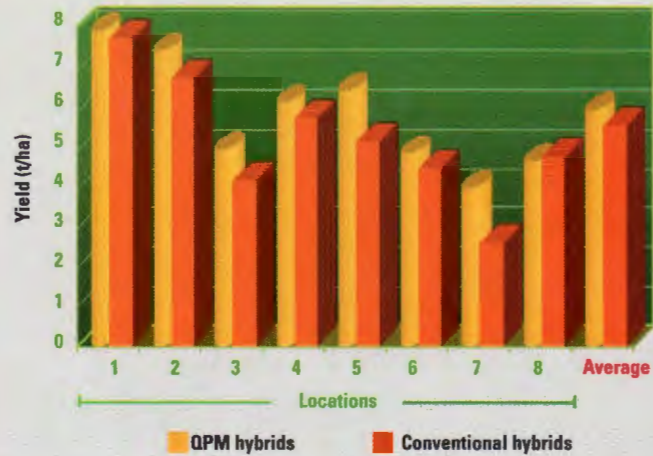
CIMMYT.

International Maize and Wheat
Improvement Center

PRM

Programa Regional de Maíz

HQ-61 was developed by CENTA working closely with CIMMYT using experimental lines from CIMMYT, whose scientists worked for nearly three decades to develop high protein maize that looks, tastes, and yields like normal maize or better. CIMMYT breeder and Salvadoran native, Hugo Córdova, has led the center's efforts in recent years to develop and spread high yielding QPM worldwide. The work



In tests at eight locations in El Salvador in 1998, QPM hybrids consistently outyielded conventional maize hybrids.

Headlines in Mexican newspaper describe the potential of new QPM Hybrids



has sparked considerable interest and government promotion initiatives similar to those of El Salvador in countries such as China, Mexico and Guatemala.

In the closing speech the Vice president of El Salvador, Carlos Quintanilla commended CENTA, MAG and CIMMYT for their efforts and dedication toward the QPM success that will help to improve the nutrition of 6,000,000 Salvadoreans.

In his talk during the release ceremony, the Vice President of Nicaragua, Enrique Bolaños Geyer, said QPM represents a technological quantum leap. "It's almost miraculous," Bolaños said. "It augers a notable improvement in Central Americans' diets."

Significant support for research on QPM has come from UNDP and the Nippon Foundation. CENTA-CIMMYT collaboration is part of the Regional Maize Program for Central America and the Caribbean (Programa Regional de Maíz, or PRM), a network funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.